

The Athenian Mercury:

Tuesday November 28. 1693.

Quest. 1. Whether a Minister, when he Visits and Prays with a sick Person, tho' of another Parish, and takes Money for so doing, does not only what is mean and unbecoming, but also what is unlawful?

Answ. We cannot think that any Minister wou'd do such a thing as Pray by a Sick Person out of a Principle of Interest, either in his own or anothers Parish; but as to Visiting and Praying with, or instructing Persons at such a time, it is Charity, and may without an Injury to any Person be performed, in whatsoever place a Minister may meet with an Opportunity of doing it: And tho' such a Visit shou'd not be made intentionally to gain by it, yet if the Minister is in Narrow Circumstances, and the Sick Persons, or their Friends, either on that Account, or in Gratitude for the Kindness, offers him some small Present, We don't think him Obliged to refuse it; but We dare say none of 'em will ever demand it.

Quest. 2. What's the reason that People Dream of what they never heard nor thought, and yet sometimes it has come to pass afterwards?

Answ. Pharaoh's Dreams, and those of some few others, foretelling what shou'd happen, has without doubt been an Encouragement to some Superstitious People to Credit the like in themselves, not considering that those were upon extraordinary Accounts, and more particularly designed by God for the Preservation of many; whereas their own are Created by their Fancies, partly sleeping and partly waking; for whatsoever their Dreams want of perfect Prophecy, they'll be sure after the Event has happened to supply by their Inventive Faculties, and if it was not the same word for word, yet without doubt by Interpretation the sense must agree. But We see no reason to Credit any thing of this Nature, except in the aforesaid Case, where God may be said particularly to inspire the Fancy, and are well satisfied no wife Person ever pretends to those Discoveries, Dreams in a great measure proceeding from the Natural Temperament and Habit of the Body, assisted by the Fancy and Imagination, and why that which we Fancy in the Night shou'd have more signification than if we imagined it by Day, We see no reason.

Quest. 3. There were two Sisters compell'd by their Relations to marry two Men of equal Fortunes, but one of their Husbands predominant Vice is immoderate Love of Wine, and the other of Women; I desire to know which of the Women is most unhappy thereby, and how they may reclaim them?

Answ. If he that will Whore won't drink, and has so much Common Sense as to take Care of his Health, his Wives Carats is probably most secure; for he that will be drunk, nothing comes amiss to him, Whoring, Quarelling, Cutting of Throats, or any thing, without being capable of any Precaution, whatsoever the Effect may be. Then as for their Estates, they are both in a fair way, and he that is the heartiest Sinner will be sure to Sacrifice all soonest. But to reform them will be a difficult Task, yet We believe a Prudent Wife may go very far towards the doing of it: Let her whose Husband Loves others, be as Complainant as possible, without taking Notice that she knows he gives her any reason for the contrary, and not too fond, for his Love being upon the ebb that way, she'll quite lose it, and he'll be apt to think she's Obliging purely to please her self, but she must do the part of a good Wife, and let her Care be more to show her Reason than Tenderness, omitting nothing that may make his Life easie, and her Company agreeable. Then the other, whose Husband is half Brute, half Man, she must have her tyme of

Reasoning and Patience; but if he's Obstinate, and never capable of considering either the loss of his Health or his Credit, she may try if she can prevail with him to leave his Companions and retire, under other Pretences, and not mention the true Cause; if she can't do that, engage some Company still to Visit him as may detain him at home, and there be sure neither to want good Wine nor Diversions suitable to his Temper; this may in time prevail on him, tho' We won't promise, for a Drunkard commonly proves an incorrigible Tort of an Animal.

Quest. 4. Whether fighting a Duel for a Mistress, as it's now practis'd, be not against all Laws, both Divine and Humane, and so ought to be taken Notice of by the Magistrate, altho' no Death ensues?

Answ. For one Man to Covet the Blood of another is very unnatural, and consequently a Breach of his Duty; and Duelling upon any account whatsoever, is a most rash, foolish and wicked thing, and no better than wishing the Death of him they Challenge. But except there was a Penalty inflicted upon any one that shou'd make or receive a Challenge, it does not concern the Magistrate to call Men to an account for their Thoughts and Intentions, and where there is no Life lost, there's no Injury done to the Publick, whatsoever the Parties might design.

Quest. 5. I have very lately married a Wife of a considerable Fortune that was left her by her Grandfather, but I am credibly informed that it was got by very ill means, as Extortion, Fraud, Deceit, &c. I have ever since my Possession of this ill-gotten Wealth, been very uneasy, and have kept it by ~~it~~ self, not making use of it for fear of Poysoning that which was mine before: I am very well satisfied in my Wife, that she is a good virtuous Woman, and of a singular good Nature: Pray give me your Advice what I were best to do, Whether I may make Use of this Money without offence to God, or danger of Corrupting the rest, and how far I was in the wrong, I knowing this Money was ill got before I was married, but not before I was in Love with her?

Answ. If all Men were as Cautious, we shou'd have more innocent dealing in the World, but because some Men are Knaves, others are not obliged to be Fools, and thereby become more scrupulous than either Reason or Religion requires. If you know any Person or Persons that have been wronged by him whose Estate you possess, We think you ought in Conscience to make reparation, by restoring what has been taken from them by Fraud; but if you only know in the general it was ill got, and not the Injuries done thereby, you may assure your self (supposing you make a good use of it, by being as Charitable as your Circumstances will allow) it will prosper with you; for since you are free from the Guilt, you will also be free from the deserved Punishment of such Practices. And shou'd you be inclined to give it all away, the Poor may for the same Reasons refuse to accept of it, as you do. As for your taking a Wife whose Fortune was so got, you're ne're the more to blame, since you took it as a Valuable Consideration of your ensuing Charge, and did not choose it as ill-gotten Wealth, designing to make an honest Use of it.

Quest. 6. I have some time since Buried my Wife, and when she lay upon her Death-Bed I made a Vow that if it shou'd please God to take her from me, I would never Marry again; but having lately happened to lodge in a House where there is a young Lady of a meane Fortune, which I am very much smitten with, I have made

made my Addresses to her, and have at last got her Consent to live with me as a Wife, no other ways than taking one anothers Words, in which I have made a Vow to be Constant to her, and she hath made a Vow to be True and Faithful to me; I have likewise made a Vow, in Case I dye, to settle a yearly Maintenance on her during her Life, and if she have any Children by me, to settle them well in the World: I desire you to Resolve me these two Queries:

1. Whether I may make this Contract with this young Lady, and not break the Vow I have made to my former Wife?

2. And whether the Promises and Vows we have made to each other are not acceptable before God, in Case we perform all things according to the uttermost of our Powers?

Answ. 1. You mistake the Nature of your Vow, or you cou'd ne're be ignorant that this Practice wou'd be as great a Breach on't as you can possibly make; for you undoubtedly designed it either to satisfie your Wife that your Children shou'd not be wronged, if you have any; or if not, that no other Woman should ever after possess your esteem. Supposing the first, it was not altogether unreasonable, second Matches generally proving so fatal to the first Wives Children: But if the last only, 'twas equally foolish for her to desire, or you to grant such a thing, no Man knowing one day what he shall be the next; and you are Obliged to Marry if you can't live Honest without, and may as well take her you like as another.

Answ. 2. No, they are not, since there remains undone that part which is Necessary for decency and Order, by the performing of which you are no more guilty of Breaking your Vow, but take a more lawfull way so to do, than by living in a continued Act of Fornication. Nor can any Happiness be expected from a Vicious Contract, and the Gentlewoman has no more reason to believe you won't be false to her than to your former Promises, now you have found the way to break them.

Quest. 7. I desire you to Answer to these Questions: First, Whether I ought to go to my private Prayers in the Church as soon as I come to my Seat? If it happens that the Minister is actually at Prayer in the publick Prayers of the Church, ought not I rather immediately to join with him?

Secondly, Whether it be lawful for me (if a Minister) to stay in the Vestry all the time of the publick Prayers, and not come into the Church 'till the last Psalm is singing, and then go up in the Pulpit?

Thirdly, Supposing I am all the time of Divine Service in the Church, and join with the Congregation in the publick Prayers and singing Psalms, may I leave off joining with the Publick Worship before it is done, and Pray privately in my Pulpit?

Answ. 1. Every one ought to go to Church soon enough to beg the Blessing of God Almighty upon their Devotions, that he wou'd be pleas'd to accept of them, and keep their Minds fixed on those Duties they go to perform: But when Persons happen to stay 'till Divine Service is begun, they must not be so long in their Private Addresses, but a short Ejaculation or two We think ought to be offered.

Answ. 2. If Lawful it is not Expedient, since it gives People occasion to say, The greatest Asserters of our Prayers despise 'em themselves, and upon that account, were they a less excellent Form, we shou'd be

glad if the Minister wou'd take a sufficient time before to Consider his Sermon, and always show his Approbation of our Prayers by being present at them.

Answ. 3. But as the Minister does not come only to give a Personal Attendance, but also to Teach and Instruct the People, so he is to have a respect to that Office, and to take so much time as is requisite for him to make his Private Addresses to God in, which We think may be best done after Service is ended, whilst the Psalm is singing.

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